

Infill/Refill Development

Department of City Planning 2007/8 Work Program Item

Proposed Scope of Work

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Overview

A 3-phase work program is proposed. Each phase includes a public workshop, which cumulatively build towards achieving buy-in to a series of targeted recommendations. The process will culminate in an impact analysis of the proposed alternatives and a description all three phases of the work program.

- Phase 1 will scope the magnitude of the activity and set criteria for assessing the magnitude of the potential problem
- Phase 2 will further refine the understanding of the problem and research regulatory solutions employed in other comparable municipalities
- Phase 3 will be the adoption process of any suggested changes to development regulations or procedures in the Zoning Code

PHASE 1: DEFINING THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Task 1.1: GIS analysis

This task involves tracking teardown/rebuild activity and major additions over a five year period. An initial set of parameters for this task has been defined as set forth below; subsequent work may lead to these being modified:

Teardowns/rebuilds:

- A demolition permit was filed for in the past 5 years
- Use of property is a one or two family home
- Property is located in a residential district
- A building less than 5 years of age is currently located on the property

Subdivisions/Recombinations

- Infill subdivisions/recombinations processed within the past 5 years

This task will result in a map, a series of summary statistics (how many teardowns in each year, how many major additions, average sizes, etc.), and an inventory to be field checked in Task 2. *(Note: This task has been completed for 2007, and a number of new construction projects have been identified based on the above criteria. An earlier iteration of this information was presented to City Council in October 2007, and the latest version will be presented to the public during the first public workshop).*

Task 1.2: Field Surveys & Photo Database

Since the above task will result in a list of several hundred properties, the next task would be to visit a representative sample of the properties and take photos of the existing conditions. This photo database is essential for undertaking the later task of separating out those rebuilds and additions which may be considered improvements to the neighborhoods, and those that might be considered detriments. For comparison purposes, “before” pictures may be obtained from the Wake County tax records for a selected subset of properties. *(Note: While a large number of photographs have been assembled from various sources, staff continues to field document situations of new residential construction that meet the criteria listed in task 1.1).*

Public Workshop 1: Results of Data Collection

This would be the first of two topical workshops. The workshop will be held during the first week of April 2008. The purpose of this workshop will be to present the initial findings Tasks 1 and 2, and gain input on criteria to use to determine when a specific infill project might be considered a detriment rather than a benefit. A visual preference survey will be shown to gauge the public perception of infill development, and identify any problems, if any. Staff will document all results. By doing this in a public forum, it will avoid charges that City staff arbitrarily picked criteria. The presentation will also serve as an important reality check and/or wakeup call.

Task 1.3: Classification of Infill/Refills

Based on the criteria developed at the public meeting, the properties in the inventory would be grouped by planning staff into three classes: beneficial, potentially of concern, and problematic. The middle category is intended to recognize the fuzziness of the classification procedure and the fact that reasonable people may disagree on what constitutes a problem. An alternative would be to assign a numerical score to each property, perhaps ranking from 1 to 5 based on whether the new structure would be considered by most people to be a benefit or a detriment.

PHASE 2: REGULATORY SOLUTIONS

Task 2.1: Best Practices Review

DCP staff will next undertake research regarding the best practices employed in other municipalities, including specific zoning provisions such as FAR caps; discretionary review procedures, including design review; design guidelines; and any other tools which may be relevant. DCP will test the best practices to determine what works best for Raleigh’s neighborhoods, including the Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District (NCOD), a modification to which is currently under consideration. The results of this analysis will be compiled into both a written document and a PowerPoint presentation. This information will be presented at the second public workshop.

Task 2.2: Identification of Regulatory Tools

Based on the comments of the first public workshop, the results of the field surveys and the examination of best management practices, staff will identify specific regulatory tools which could be implemented to prevent development classified as ‘problematic’. These may include overall house size; height; design issues; setbacks; and other factors that contribute to a particular house being perceived as “out of scale” or out of character with it’s neighbors or having an adverse impact on the views and sunlight available to adjoining properties. Other specific issues may relate to the placement of mechanical services (A/C units, meters, etc.).

Public Workshop 2: Potential Solutions

The second public workshop will be held in late May 2008. At this workshop, staff will present identified problems and issues and a summary of relevant regulatory tools and solution employed by other municipalities. The discussion will be focused on which of these tools, if any, may be appropriate for Raleigh. Additionally, the results of the visual preference survey will be shared with the public. Staff will discuss the NCOD rezoning process with the public. Based on the public feedback, DCP will develop alternatives for adoption if necessary.

PHASE 3: ADOPTION PROCESS

The adoption process will require that a specific text change be scheduled for public hearing, followed by the typical referral to the Planning Commission, time spent in Text Change Committee, Council debate, and an eventual vote. The following are the anticipated support tasks.

Task 3.1: Text Change Language

In collaboration with the City Attorney, City Planning Staff may draft specific ordinance language implementing the draft recommendations. This language would be in addition to the NCOD text change that will be reviewed by Planning Commission and City Council on March 18, 2008. Such text change language may be prepared in time for the June public hearing, depending on the overall progress of the study.

Task 3.2: Impact Analysis

An impact analysis report will be prepared for the proposed text change. The report will address the following factors:

- Property affected in terms of land area and number of parcels.
- Impacts on the development yield of lots of various sizes
- Impacts on neighborhood character.

The impact analysis may also explore the economic factors of infill development on existing neighborhoods. The impact analysis will be completed by early July 2008 prior to the public hearing in time to be incorporated into the “blue book.”